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PARENT INVOLVEMENT AT THE SECONDARY LEVEL?

IT CAN BE DONE!

A Project
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
Education: Secondary

by
Suzanne Janette Borucki

June 1998

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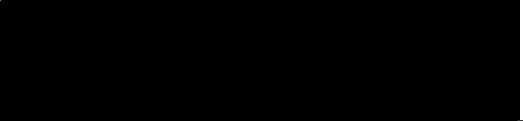
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Approved by:



Alvin Wolf, First Reader

6/1/98
Date



Ellen Kronowitz, Second Reader

ABSTRACT

We've all seen the headlines glaring at us from the front page of the newspaper: "America's Students Are Not Achieving!" Most of the media is quick to blame the schools and more specifically, the teachers; however, the schools and the teachers know that they cannot be the only ones teaching America's students. They need help. This help needs to come from those closest to the students, their parents. It has been proven time and again that the more parents are involved in their child's education the better the student tends to do academically and behaviorally.

Traditionally, parents participate more in their child's education when the child is at the elementary level of schooling. As the child progresses to the secondary, the amount of parental involvement becomes less, and in some cases ceases to exist. However, this is the time when parents especially need to stay involved or even become more involved in their child's education, because this can be a time of great inner turmoil and/or conflict for the child; a time when a child makes a conscious decision to do well in school or not, and even whether or not to stay in school.

This project is a quantitative student that asks the parents of a middle school in San Bernardino, California, "What can the school do for you to help you stay involved in your child's education?" The five-question survey was administered to one thousand fifty parents of sixth, seventh,

and eighth graders and was available in Spanish. There was a forty-three percent return. This project indicates that parents do want to be involved in their child's education, but many just do not know what to do or how they can participate.

To My Wonderfully Supportive Family

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CHAPTER ONE

Background

Introduction

"The best thing to spend on your child is time."

--Anonymous

The more involved parents are in their child's education, the better the child tends to do in school. The evidence is overwhelming about the benefits of parent involvement in a child's school activities.. It shows an increase in attendance, an increase in academic achievement, and a decrease in behavior problems. Since children spend more of their waking hours outside of school than in it, and most of this time is spent at home, parents are their children's most influential teachers.

Context of the Problem

The need for parental involvement in their child's education is clearly evident (Henderson, 1981). Schools can develop effective programs to involve parents in the education of their children, as well as provide parenting and informational and/or educational classes for the adults, regardless of the communities they serve. In "at-risk" schools this can be one effective way of meeting the needs of our diverse populations.* When schools are sensitive to the cultures and needs of the families, when there is respect for the parents' feelings and concerns, the parents are more

✓

encouraged and likely to become involved (Gutloff, 1997).

There is a lack of parent involvement at Shandin Hills Middle School in San Bernardino, California where I have been teaching for four years. Few parents show up at Back-to-School-Night or other school functions. Most teachers do try to communicate with parents via the telephone, often for academic or behavior problems, but this is ineffectual much of the time.. Some parents do try to do something about their child's problem, but most of the time nothing is accomplished.

Since research has indicated that student achievement is linked to parent involvement (Henderson, 1981), and the focus of the school is student achievement, a plausible conclusion is that the school find a way to involve its parents as a means to raise student achievement. Of course, there are other factors that contribute to student achievement, such as internal motivation; parent involvement and student achievement is not a one hundred percent relationship.

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project is to find out what kinds of activities and services the parents of Shandin Hills Middle School (SHMS) in San Bernardino, California would like to see the school provide to raise parent involvement at the school.

Significance of the Project

Strengthening the connection between families and schools is so important that one of America's National Education Goals declares that, "Every school will promote partnerships that will increase parental involvement and participation in promoting the social, emotional, and academic growth of children" by the year 2000 (National PTA, 1997). Moreover, the California State Board of Education has issued a "Policy on Parent Involvement" which requires schools to involve parents at all grade levels in a variety of roles. These programs should be designed to:

- *Help parents develop parenting skills;
 - *Provide parents with knowledge of how to assist children in learning at home;
 - *Provide access to and coordinating with community and support services;
 - *Promote clear two-way communication between school and family;
 - *Involve parents, after appropriate training, in support roles at school;
 - *Support parents as decision makers and help to develop their leadership in governance and advisory roles.
- (Corcovelos, 1998)

Home-School Compacts and Parent Involvement Policies are also a part of the new regulations for Title I schools, as well as to insure that districts (schools) allocate at least one percent of their funding for parent involvement activities. People will only become involved when they see how it will benefit them. If the school has the "right" programs/activities, then more parents will become involved; it will benefit them, their children, and the school (Posnick-Goodwin, 1997). ✓

CHAPTER TWO

Review of the Literature

Introduction

"The ring of respect encircling students, teachers, and parents is an essential relationship for learning" (Ebersole, 1979). If there is a break anywhere in this circle, there is a breakdown in student achievement. However, if there is communication between parties, cooperation, and sincere caring, students tend to achieve more.

Definition

What exactly does the term "parent involvement" mean? There are varying degrees of parent involvement, from those parents who only make sure that their child gets to school every day, to those who show up at Back-to-School-Night or other "special" events, to those who are classroom aids or tutors, and to those who are on School Site Council. For students to be successful in school, the parents need to be more involved than just making sure that their child goes to school every day (although being in school every day is desirable). In this project, the term "parent involvement" refers to parents (or other primary caretakers) who show a strong interest in their child's schooling by participating in school-sponsored events and taking an active role in the school, either through the PTA or other similar organizations.

Evidence

There is certainly no shortage of evidence that links parent involvement with an increase in student attendance, an increase in student achievement, and a decrease in student behavior problems in schools at all levels. Parents are a tremendous source for public education, one that remains largely untapped (Henderson, 1981), especially at the secondary level. When parents are involved in their child's schooling, the child sees that the parents value education and view the school as an important place to be (Jones, 1991).

The form of parent involvement does not seem to be critical, only that it is reasonably well-planned, comprehensive, and long-lasting (Henderson, 1981). Even the programs that just have parent reinforcing what is being taught at school are effective (Barth, 1979). What has become very clear is the proven detriment that is caused when there is no continuity between home and school. If parents are not involved in their children's learning, schools, and thus children, are being deprived of an integral source of support (Henderson, 1981).

The issue of parent involvement has become so important that the National PTA of the United States has secured parent involvement as one of its eight nation goals:

Every school will promote partnerships that will increase parental involvement and participation in promoting the social, emotional, and academic growth of children (1997).

The National PTA has also come out with its own National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement Programs. The six standards are as follows:

- Standard I: Communicating-- Communication between home and school is regular, two-way, and meaningful.
- Standard II: Parenting-- Parenting skills are promoted and supported.
- Standard III: Student Learning-- Parents play an integral role in assisting student learning.
- Standard IV: Volunteering-- Parents are welcome in the school, and their support and assistance are sought.
- Standard V: School Decision Making and Advocacy-- Parents are full partners in the decisions that affect children and families.
- Standard VI: Collaborating with Community-- Community resources are used to strengthen schools, families, and student learning.

The association believes that effectively engaging parents and families in the education of their children "has the potential to be far more transformational than any other type of education reform" (1997).

Parents' Role in Education

Raising children is the most challenging job a person can do, and parents are the most important people in their child's life. Parents need to have the time, energy, self-control, and most of all, love to give their child the best head start in life. This involvement needs to continue throughout the child's early life (at least through age eighteen). Parents educate their children from the moment of

birth (Jones, 1991), either positively or negatively. The majority of people do not take parenting classes before they have children. Thus, they learn on a trial and error basis.

Just as parents do not stop teaching their child at the end of their child's primary education, they should not decrease the amount of time they spend involved in their child's secondary education. Parents and teachers are intertwined in the complementary task of educating children. However, they may find themselves as adversaries if society does not establish that parents and teachers must work together throughout a child's education (Henderson, 1981). Many parents remain involved in their child's elementary schooling only to "drop out" when their child reached the secondary level. There are several reasons for this. The major one are as follows:

- *Teenagers are finding their identity and asserting their independence of adults. As they look to their peers for friendship and approval, they resist having mom or dad "hanging around" (Rich, 1987). At the same time, parents believe that the child's entrance into secondary school signals that they must start "letting go."

- *Parent do not understand their adolescent-- a person who is not a child nor an adult, but at an intermediate stage of physical and mental development. They do not know how to relate to this "new" person (Rich, 1987).

- *The secondary school's structure is not conducive to

parent involvement. Parents often feel intimidated by the secondary school setting and environment (Rich, 1987). The student has changed to a different school, which is generally farther away from home. It is usually bigger and the child has more teachers. Furthermore, parents think that the subject material is beyond their cognition, such as advanced algebra or physics.

Schools' Role in Parent Involvement

Most secondary schools do promote parent involvement, but usually as a minimal formality only. These events encompass Back-to-School-Night, Open Houses, and College/Career Nights. Sports events, concerts, and plays are also major events in which many parents participate. And, of course, parents become forcibly involved when the school contacts them about attendance, grades, and/or behavior problems.

Despite the "numerous" opportunities in which the schools describe when parents are invited to the schools, parents often report that there are not many occasions when they are expected to be at the school (Johnson and Ransom, 1983). This lack of awareness may be attributed to inadequate communication. Although the schools may send flyers and newsletters home, if these correspondences go home with the students, they often do not reach the parents for one reason or another, including: students forgetting to give their parents the notices, throwing the notices away, and

losing the notices. Or, quite simply, these meetings are so widely spaced apart that parents truly believe that there are not many opportunities for parental involvement. Many parents do not consider that sports events, concerts, and plays are a form of parent participation in their child's education.

Parents (and some teachers) might wish that the school could educate the children alone, but today's schools need families and today's families need the schools (Rich, 1987). To a large extent, schools want to help families, but knowing what the families need and/or want are not always apparent; therefore, it is the schools' responsibility to determine what the parents both need and want.

How Parent Involvement Helps Schools, Parents, and Students

Parents will become involved in schools when they see how it benefits them. They will participate in activities, programs, and services only to the extent that their personal needs and interests are understood and met. When they see that the school is determined to have their input, they will respond, and ultimately participate. It is the individual school's responsibility to give the parents a feeling of partnership, the training, and the education needed to be involved in their children's schooling (Gutloff, 1997).

Parents are often reluctant to participate in school activities for a number of reasons, one of which is that many parents are afraid of schools. Sometimes schools

unintentionally conjure up bad feelings for parents. Someone who experiences rejection or failure at school, who is illiterate, or was "labeled" in school will not be excited about participating. Involvement comes when a safe feeling occurs, both physically and emotionally. Additionally, there are parents, married or single, who must work when the activities take place. Parents need to feel welcome and accepted for who they are and what they can offer (Jones, 1991). ✓

Parent Involvement Programs

Successful parent involvement programs include:

AN EMPHASIS ON COMMUNITY-FRIENDLY COMMUNICATION SKILLS

- *Educators should avoid "looking down" on families or patronizing them.
- *Avoid using educational jargon that parents may not understand.
- *School signs in primary languages indicate everyone is welcome.
- *Front office staff is trained to greet everyone with courtesy.
- *Written material is concise and easily readable (in primary languages).
- *Parent-friendly school. (Posnick-Goodwin, 1997)

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT EFFORTS AND DECISION-MAKING

- *Involve parents at every stage of developing school plans.
- *Encourage parents and other community members to make suggestions and share ideas.
- *Hold meetings at different times, and possibly at other locations to accommodate families' schedule and mobility needs.
- *Collaborate with other community agencies (law enforcement, neighborhood watch, service organizations) to solve common problems. Schools and parents have to realize that schools cannot provide all the help families may need. (Posnick-Goodwin, 1997)

MAKING EVERYONE FEEL WELCOME

- *Find some "space" to set up a Parent Center... a few chairs and/or couch, a table, some bookcases, a couple of plants.
- *Make a coffee/tea pot and cups available in an accessible location.
- *Ask for a donation or buy a microwave and small refrigerator for use in the Parent Center.
- *Offer child care.
- *Be available for informal chats.
- *Offer a special badge or volunteer button to wear on campus.
- *Provide certificates of recognition for participation, completion of a class, etc.
- *Be empathetic, but do not "pity" their situation.
- *Encourage, encourage, encourage! (Gutloff, 1997)

It is important to find a variety of activities/programs in which parents can become involved, so as to meet the diversity of needs and interests. Activities/programs that many parents tend to be interested in, include:

- *Coffee Klatches
- *Parenting Classes, including issues on:
 - Gangs
 - Drugs
 - Safety
- *Adult Education Classes
 - ESL
 - GED
 - Sewing
 - Nutrition
 - Family Health Care
 - Aerobic Exercises
 - Computer Programs
 - Crafts
- *Campus/Classroom Volunteers
- *Basic Sustenance Programs
- *Family Nights
 - Writing
 - Reading
 - Math
 - Science
 - History
 - Art/Drama
 - Sports

*Fund Raisers

- Newspapers
- Cans
- Bake Sales
- Rummage Sales (Chrispeela, 1994)

Summary

Development of a successful parent involvement program requires wholehearted commitment. The school's staff has to want the parents involved. It is not lack of parental concern that often keeps parents away, but rather lack of support from educators (Jones, 1991).[✓] Parents do care about their children, and most will do what is best for them. They will become involved if their needs and interests are taken into account, they feel welcome, and they are given the opportunity. When parents become involved in their children's schools, they learn about the educational programs firsthand and become advocates for the school (Jones, 1991).[✓] What school would like to have some positive accolades instead of the usual putdowns? "All of them!" educators would say. All schools should be concerned with involving their students' parents in some manner. When parents and schools work together to educate children, no matter what the grade level is, it is a win-win situation.

CHAPTER THREE

Design and Methodology

Subjects

Rather than to begin offering services without knowledge of what services are needed or wanted, a survey was chosen as the means to obtain that information from the subjects, Shandin Hills Middle Schools

's students' parents. A survey is the fastest way to access information from many subjects, and since I did not have much time to get the information needed before we went off-track, this is the approach I took.

The survey that was administered was non-proportional and based on convenience. One thousand fifty students were given the survey to take home to their parents. The school's student population is comprised of 41% Hispanic, 33% White, 20% Black, 4% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 2% American Indian. The mobility rate is approximately 50% (Shandin Hills Middle School Report, 1997). There are approximately 160 sixth graders, 470 seventh graders, and 450 eighth graders. Those students whose parents speak Spanish were given a survey in Spanish. By stratifying the survey by grade and language, I will be able to determine if there is a greater necessity for a particular group's needs and/or wants.

Instrumentation

The research was based on a quantitative design, a design that yields statistics and or percentages. Since I

was curious to know how many people (parents) were interested in a particular service, this design was the most appropriate for this project. Additionally, this design was chosen because of its validity and reliability. As stated earlier, the information was gathered using a survey. Questions were formulated so that the findings would help determine the needs/wants of the parents whose children attend Shandin Hills Middle School. The survey supported the two focus questions: "What do the parents want from the school?" and "How can we get the parents involved?". Before the survey was administered, consent was given by the site principal, Stephanie Cereceres.

Design of the instrument

I began the process of creating a survey by looking for surveys that other schools used to evaluate parent involvement at their schools. I found only one that was of any use to this project. It was used by another school in the San Bernardino City Unified School District-- Curtis Middle School. The survey used by Curtis Middle School was long (over two pages) and included questions that would not be relevant for Shandin Hills Middle School. I did use some questions and possible answer choices from Curtis' survey, rewording some of them and condensing the entire survey down to one page. The questions from Curtis' survey that I did not use dealt with "help during times of crisis" and other personal information that was not needed by Shandin Hills at this time.

The survey that I developed asks five questions and has a space for comments (see Appendix A). The respondents are asked to check as many answers that are applicable to them in questions 1, 2, 3, and 5, and a yes or no response for question 4. The questions asked the respondents about their interests(1), their interest in after school programs for their children(2), the most convenient time for "extra" services(3), availability of child care(4), and their reasons for not coming to the school(5). These five questions were chosen because they had the most potential to lead me to the answers to the questions I have been asking, "What do the parents want from the school?" and "How can we get the parents involved?" The survey was translated into Spanish to accommodate the large Spanish-speaking community that our school serves.

Before making copies of the survey to distribute to the students to take home, i gave the survey to my principal, Stephanie Cereceres, for authorization. It was approved after she made two minor changes in wording: from "Intersession (December-April)" to "Intersession (December/April" and "Does not trust staff" to "Does not know staff". I made copies of the survey, color-coding them according to grade level: eighth grade= blue, seventh grade= green, and sixth grade= yellow. The surveys in Spanish were printed in white for easier identification.

Data Collection

The surveys were distributed during fifth period, our

advisory period, on Monday, March 16, 1998. The students were given incentives to return the surveys by Friday, March 20, 1998-- individual extra credit in their Reading & Language Arts classes and an ice cream party for all classes that had a one hundred percent return. The surveys were collected until Wednesday, March 25, 1998, the day that Shandin Hills went off-track for four weeks.

Data Treatment

Data Treatment procedures were based on inductive logic, or a bottom up approach. I did not start with a hypothesis, but rather with the two questions mentioned previously, "What do the parents want from the school?" and "How can we get the parents involved?" in mind. I tabulated the findings in actual numbers and calculated the percentages for all responses (see Appendix B). After discussing the data with my principal, I presented the information to the School Site council. Lastly, with all of this input, I made some recommendations for implementing a parent involvement plan to the staff at Shandin Hills Middle School. It was well-received by most and "Just one more thing to do" by a few others.

CHAPTER FOUR

Data Analysis

Presentation of the Findings

The data collected supported the research that parents do want to be involved in their child's education. Four hundred fifty-six students' parents/guardians (43% of the students' caretakers) completed and returned the survey. The parents of students at Shandin Hills Middle school want the school to offer additional programs for the students after school or during intersession, as well as adult classes and other services for themselves. Furthermore, twenty-three percent of the returned surveys included comments and/or suggestions.

Parent Services

The parents clearly need and/or want to have adult education classes (57.3%), for both academic and personal enrichment, available on the Shandin hills campus. Two other strong desires the parents want are a CPR/first aid class (46.3%) and a parent library (32.9%). The parenting, nutrition, and forms classes were chosen only twenty-five percent of the time or less, 25.0%, 15.8%, and 16.7% respectively, while the informational workshops choice was marked 25.2% of the time. The total percentage does not equal one hundred due to the directions, "Choose all that apply;" the majority of the respondents did select more than

one choice. This is also true for questions two, three, and five.

Student Services

If the students' parents were given the option of a longer school day, their children would stay at school longer. It is unquestionably evident that they want the school to provide services for their children after the regular school day. The majority want to see an after school tutoring program established, 62.9%. Likewise, they want to sign their children up for after school recreational (45.2%) and academic enrichment (48.5%) courses.

Overall, twenty-three point nine percent of the respondents would like additional counseling available for the students; however, forty-two percent of the Spanish form respondents want additional counseling for their students. Other student services choices were not deemed as necessary.

Time of Services and Child Care Availability

Seventy point six percent of the parents would like the services offered after school. while only sixteen point five percent would like them offered during the school day. Additionally, twenty-two point eight percent want these services offered during intersession. the month that we are off-track.

When asked whether they would come to school more often if child care were available for younger children, many

Table of Total findings

Survey Choice	Actual Number	Percentage (%)
1. Parent Services:		
Parenting Class	+114	+25.5
Nutrition Class	72	15.6
Parent Library	150	32.9
Forms Class	76	16.7
CPR/First Aid	211	46.3
Adult Ed. (ESL, GED)	*262	*57.5
Adult Ed. (Enrichment)	*262	*57.5
Informational Workshops	115	25.2
2. Child Services:		
Child Care	81	17.8
A. S. Recreation	206	45.2
A. S. Academics	221	48.5
A. S. Tutoring	287	62.9
Counseling	109	23.9
Other	21	1.5
3. Time:		
After School	332	70.6
Intersession	104	22.8
During School Day	75	16.5
4. Child Care Provided:		
Yes	214	46.9
No	162	35.5
Not Applicable	75	9.9
5. Did NOT come because:		
Uncomfortable-- English	70	15.4
No Child Care	41	9.0
Didn't Know Staff	47	10.3
No Help?	65	14.3
Not Confidential	^32	^7.0
Uncomfortable-- Help	^27	^5.9
No Time	114	31.6
Other	110	24.1

+ = These numbers include the response of the single choice for three categories on the Spanish form.

* = These two categories have been added together due to the single choice on the Spanish form.

^ = These numbers may be slightly lower due to the fact that they were eliminated on the Spanish form.

parents said that they would (46.9%). Thirty-five point five percent said that they would not come even if child care were available, and nine point nine percent wrote in that this question was not applicable to them. Some respondents may not have needed child care, but since the survey did not have a "Not Applicable" choice, they simply marked the "No" choice, thus the reasonably high percentage of negative responses.

Reasons Parents Do NOT Come to School

The main reasons that parents do not come to school for whatever the cause may be is that they "Do not have the time" (31.6%) and "Other" (24.1%). Parents who chose "Other" wrote in reasons such as employment". Moreover, those who responded with "Do not have the time" also wrote in that they were at work and could not get the time off, even though there was no space for comment next to this choice. Other reasons include: "Uncomfortable speaking English" (15.4% overall, 66.0% on the Spanish form), "Not sure that anyone could help" (14.0% overall, 48.0% on the Spanish form), "Do not know staff" (10.3%), "No child care for younger children" (9.0%), "Fear that help would not be confidential" (*7.0%), and "Uncomfortable asking for help" (*5.9%). *The last two choices were omitted from the Spanish form, so the percentages would probably be higher if these choices were available.

One positive statement many parents wrote in this

section is that they DO come to school when there is a problem and/or concern (13.9%).

Comments

Out of the 456 returned surveys, 102 had a comment of some type on them in the "Comments" section. Twenty wrote, "Thank you" [for your interest] and seventeen made suggestions of other activities that they want to see the school offer (band competitions and student performances). Others wrote in about the condition of the school facility (7) and/or the new bus law making it difficult for them to drop off and pick up their child(ren) (7). Still, others wrote in to complain about the difficulty in communicating with the teachers, "hard to get a hold of" (22) or that they had an "unpleasant" experience with the office staff (13). And lastly, there were also a few comments about student progress (11) and behavior (5).

Limitations of the design

A couple of limitations contributed to the results of the survey on parents involvement. The largest of these limitations was that both the English and Spanish versions of the survey were not exactly the same. The Spanish form omitted some of the choices or combined three choices into one as noted in a previous section. Another shortcoming in the survey was the lack of a "Not Applicable" choice for question number four, also previously noted. However,

these were not major limitations and was not a large flaw in the project.

CHAPTER FIVE

Implications for Practice

The data from the survey clearly indicates that the parents of students at Shandin Hills Middle School want to see the school start providing extra services for their children after school, both academic and recreational, as well as services for themselves. As stated previously, research has indicated that the more parents are involved with or at the school, the better the child does. So, the first step must be getting the parents to the school for activities other than coming because they have to. Becoming involved in volunteering their own services would, hopefully, be the next step for the parents.

If the school chooses to begin accommodating these wishes, and if the parents do truly get involved in the school, then it should see an upward movement of improved academia and behavior of its student population. Of course these additional programs will cost money, which is always a considerable issue for any school, but it would be well worth the investment at almost any cost.

Student Service Recommendations

The first recommendation that I would put forth to the school is to establish an after school program. There was an overwhelming desire from the parents to have their children in an after school activity. The school should definitely begin an after school tutoring program. I would recommend

2-3 teachers available to help extremely troubled students or those with difficult assignments. Additionally, I would recommend having a few student (peer) tutors available to help assist the teachers. This would give some students a "job" to do, as well as accommodate those students who may respond better to having a peer help them.

Another after school program that i would implement is the recreational activities and academic enrichment; however, before choosing which activities to implement, I would poll the students to see in what activities they would want to participate. Moreover, I would suggest that the "classes" last for six weeks and then change to another subject or activity. This will alleviate boredom, as well as give more students an opportunity to participate in the "classes" that they enjoy.

Two last suggestions that I would make to the school are: 1.) begin slowly and 2.) arrange for transportation after the tutoring, recreation, and academic enrichment sessions. Start by only offering these services two days a week, possibly Tuesdays and Thursdays, and have the programs last for only an hour, from 2:30-3:30. If the after school programs are successful, then the school could consider adding another day of the week. Furthermore, by having bus transportation available to those who normally ride the school bus, more students will be able to participate.

Parent Services Recommendations

The findings of the data analysis showed that the parents are interested in some form of adult education, for both academic needs and enrichment wants. Before implementing any of these classes at the Shandin Hills campus, the school will need to do further research. Exactly what classes do the parents need and/or want and what classes can the San Bernardino City Unified Adult Education offer at the Shandin Hills campus. Also, the school will need to find out when (what days and times) Adult Education can offer the particular classes that the parents need and/or want. This should definitely be pursued even though it may be troublesome at first.

The school needs to find an area for a Parent Library. This should be someplace on the campus where the parents can relax or chat before or after browsing through the selections. The school has been collecting items (books, audio and video tapes, pamphlets, etc.) so they do have part of the goal accomplished.

Even though there were some items on the survey that were not chosen as often, parenting classes, nutrition classes, filling-out-forms classes, and informational workshops [one of which should be on how parents can help their children at home with schoolwork], they still need to be considered. I would recommend that the school offer one of these classes or workshops once a month, and have child care available for those who need it, possibly having some

students who have taken a child care/baby sitting class watch the children with adult supervision. The CPR/First Aid class could also be rotated in this cycle, perhaps at least twice a year. Again, by not offering too much to begin with, the school can determine what is working, what is not, and can change things more easily than if they are too "gung-ho" and try to do too much at once.

Other Considerations

One choice that was not on the survey, but would be easy to implement, is a team and/or subject night once a month. Once a month a team (Shandin Hills is a middle school that employs the teaming concept-- all students on a team have the same core-academic teachers) or core subject could host a night where the team or core subject discusses or teaches an idea to both the parents and their students. The reading/ language arts and math departments have done this before, and the nights have been successful. Building on this success with other core subjects or teams would be a terrific parent involvement booster, and therefore, a wonderful school accomplishment.

Once parents begin getting involved in the school, the reasons why they did not come in the past should disappear. They will get to know the school's staff, thus they will feel more comfortable speaking to the staff and asking for help when needed. There will be more chances for contact and communication between teachers and parents. This can only

increase the parents' awareness of their student's academic progress and behavior, which, as the research has indicated, tends to lead to better achievement.

Conclusion

The notion that increased parental involvement in a child's education tends to lead to increased student achievement, increased attendance, and decreased behavior problems is not a new idea. Repeatedly, research has conclusively shown that this happens. Of course, there are students who do not "fit" this "outcome, but these exceptions are rather small in number. The data from this project supports the research; the parents of Shandin Hills Middle School students responded just as other parents have around the nation. They express the desire that the school provide programs that benefit them and their children. Adult education programs would bring the parents to the school. All parents want their children to be successful in life and that (usually) begins with being successful in school.

It is important to remember that parent involvement comes when parents are asked what they need and/or want. They need to be invited to help design or create the programs and activities in which they are being asked to participate. They are motivated to participate when their own ideas and suggestions are listened to with respect, just like anyone is, students included. Finally, no single group, families, schools, businesses, social services, can work alone to solve

the current problems of "at-risk" populations. The energies, resources, and support of all groups are required.

APPENDIX A

(The survey was printed in a larger size for distribution.)

PARENT SURVEY

SHANDIN HILLS MIDDLE SCHOOL

The staff at Shandin Hills Middle School is searching for means to provide support services to our students and their parents. In order to help us identify the needs, please complete the survey and have your student return it to his/her Reading/Language Arts teacher by March 20.

Thank You!

1. Which of the following services would you use if they were available at our school?
(Please check all that apply.)

<input type="checkbox"/> Parenting Classes	<input type="checkbox"/> CPR/First Aid Classes
<input type="checkbox"/> Nutrition Counseling	<input type="checkbox"/> Adult Education Classes (ESL, GED, Citizen, etc.)
<input type="checkbox"/> ParentLibrary (Books, Videos, Computer Software)	<input type="checkbox"/> Adult Education Classes (Computer, Enrichment, etc.)
<input type="checkbox"/> Filling-Out-Firms Class (School, Medical, Employment)	<input type="checkbox"/> Informational Workshops (Gangs, Drugs, Safety)
2. Which of the following services would you use for your child if they were available at our school site?
(Please check all that apply.)

<input type="checkbox"/> Child Care	<input type="checkbox"/> After School Tutoring
<input type="checkbox"/> After School Recreational Activities	<input type="checkbox"/> Counseling
<input type="checkbox"/> After School Academic Enrichment	<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____
3. What time would be the most convenient for these for your family?

<input type="checkbox"/> After School	<input type="checkbox"/> During the School Day
<input type="checkbox"/> Intersession (Year-Round School-- December/April)	
4. Would you be more likely to visit/come to school meetings/activities if child care were available?

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
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5. In the past, why did you NOT come to the school site when you had a question regarding your student's progress?(Please check all that apply.)

<input type="checkbox"/> Did not feel comfortable speaking English	<input type="checkbox"/> Fear that help would not be confidential
<input type="checkbox"/> Did not have child care	<input type="checkbox"/> Did not feel comfortable asking for help
<input type="checkbox"/> Did not know school staff	<input type="checkbox"/> Did not have time
<input type="checkbox"/> Not sure anyone could help	<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Please add any comments that you feel is important to the improvement of our school site.

COMMENTS

APPENDIX B COMPARISON OF SURVEY RESPONSES

Form	6th		7th		8th		Spanish	
Number of Responses	(77)		(150)		(179)		(50)	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Survey Choices								
1. Parent Services:								
Parenting Class	18	23.4	31	20.7	34	19.0	*31	*62.0
Nutrition Class	12	15.6	20	13.3	19	10.6	21	42.0
Parent Library	27	35.1	53	35.3	43	24.0	27	54.0
Forms Class	10	13.0	22	14.7	19	10.6	25	50.0
CPR/First Aid	40	51.0	72	48.0	80	44.7	19	38.0
Adult Ed. (ESL)	13	16.9	27	18.0	31	17.3	*31	*62.0
Adult Ed. (Enrich.)	33	42.9	59	39.3	68	38.0	*31	*62.0
Informational WS	28	33.8	43	28.7	53	29.6	27	54.0
2. Child Services:								
Child Care	16	20.8	25	16.7	25	14.0	15	30.0
A. S. Recreation	42	54.5	71	47.3	81	45.3	12	24.0
A. S. Academics	43	55.8	74	49.3	80	44.7	24	48.0
A. S. Tutoring	51	66.2	88	58.7	118	65.9	30	60.0
Counseling	20	26.0	28	18.7	40	22.3	21	42.0
Other	0	0.0	5	3.3	2	1.1	0	0.0
3. Time:								
After School	49	63.6	102	68.0	139	77.7	32	64.0
Intersession	24	31.2	39	26.0	33	18.4	8	16.0
During School Day	12	15.6	22	14.7	22	12.3	13	26.0
4. Child Care Provided:								
Yes	32	41.6	67	44.7	77	43.0	38	76.0
No	29	37.7	61	40.7	65	36.3	7	14.0
Not Applicable	4	5.7	28	18.7	28	15.6	0	0.0
5. Did NOT come because:								
Uncomfortable- Eng.	7	9.0	17	11.3	13	7.3	33	66.0
No Child Care	9	11.7	11	7.3	8	4.5	13	26.0
Didn't Know Staff	6	7.8	14	9.3	13	7.3	14	18.0
No Help?	10	13.0	14	9.3	16	8.9	24	48.0
Not Confidential	11	14.3	3	2.0	18	10.1	^0	0.0
Uncomfortable- Help	9	11.7	12	8.0	6	3.4	^0	0.0
No Time	26	33.8	35	23.3	72	40.2	11	22.0
Other	25	32.5	39	26.0	33	18.4	13	26.0

= Actual number of responses

% = Percentage of responses given

* = All three choices were only one choice on the Spanish form

^ = These Choices were omitted from the Spanish form

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